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CHRISTIANITY AND CHRISTIAN SCIENCE

BY REV. RANDOLPH HARRISON McKIM, D.D., LL.D., D.C.L.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE claims to be a new and improved edition of the Christian religion, resting upon a revelation made in the year 1866. It professes to accept and interpret the Bible—yet it has put forth another Bible of its own for which it claims infallibility. It uses the language of the old Bible. It calls Christ “Master.” It tells us that Christ practised Christian Science. Indeed, it says, “Christ is Christian Science.”

We must, then, face the question, Is this new religion really a new revelation from God? Is it a new and improved Christianity?

The author of the article on this subject in the December issue of *THE REVIEW* is of opinion that it is, and that the only salvation of Protestantism lies in frankly adopting the principles and methods of Christian Science. I propose to answer his question by simply comparing the Creed of Christendom with the Creed of Christian Science.

Let us proceed, then, to institute a comparison between the Creed of Christianity and the Creed of the system which calls itself Christian Science.

1. “I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of Heaven and Earth”—that is the first article of the Christian Creed. It involves, as you perceive, two statements, (1) that God is our Father, and (2) that God is the Creator of Heaven and Earth.

Compare with this the Creed of Christian Science: “God is definitely individual and not personal”; God is “the infinite and divine principle”; “God is divine principle”; “God as a principle, not a person, saves a man”; “God is not a Person.”

But if God is not a personal God, but only a principle, how can He be a Father? How can He love us? How can He pity us? How can we call Him our Father?

Again, the text-book of Christian Science declares that "Matter is unreal" (*Science and Health*, ed. of 1893, p. 173); and again, "There is no matter"; matter is "nothing but a mortal illusion." Commenting on the Genesis record of Creation, the author of this religion says, "The translators of this record entertained a false sense of Being. They believed in *the existence of matter*" (*Id.* p. 525).

If this be true, then God is not the Maker of heaven and earth; for nothing can be more certain than that that which never has existed has never been created. Indeed, it is plainly asserted in this new Bible that God is not the Creator of matter (*Id.* p. 119, ed. of 1907).

2. The second article of the Christian Creed is this: "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; he descended into hell."

Now what has the text-book of Christian Science to say on this subject? What is its creed about Jesus Christ? It tells us "that the Virgin Mother conceived this idea of God, and gave to her ideal the name of Jesus." (Thus Jesus was simply the *ideal of the Virgin*. (*Id.* p. 29, ed. of 1907.)

It denies that "the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." It distinguishes between Jesus and Christ. It tells us that Jesus suffered, but Christ never suffered. Christ was "the spiritual idea of divine love" (p. 38). It says, "Christ was incorporeal, whereas Jesus was a corporeal or bodily existence." After the so-called Ascension, Jesus disappeared, he ceased to exist: Christ alone remained, and Christ was an invisible, impersonal idea. Thus Christian Science denies the reality of the Incarnation, on which the faith of the Christian Church has been built for nineteen centuries. Christian Science says that Jesus separated from Christ after the Resurrection; but the Bible says "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever." The Bible also says "Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God; and this is that spirit of anti-Christ."

Again, it has been the faith of the Christian Church from

the beginning that Jesus Christ was the Eternal Son of God—that He was Divine—"God manifest in the flesh." But I have found no evidence of any such faith in the divinity of Jesus Christ in the Bible of Christian Science. On the contrary, Jesus is represented as not always superior to the errors of mortal belief. I read, "The Spiritual Christ was *infallible*; Jesus, as material manhood, *was not Christ*" (*Science and Health*, p. 84, ed. of 1893). The authoress concedes that "He has been rightfully regarded as the best man who ever trod this planet" (p. 364). Consider now the life, the works, and the mission of Jesus. According to the text-book of Christian Science, Jesus wrought no miracles. Indeed, "miracles are impossible" (p. 83, ed. of 1907). We are informed that "Jesus healed the sick and destroyed sin by a metaphysical process" (p. 210, ed. of 1907). In fact, he practised Christian Science, but in an imperfectly developed form. Take as a crucial instance the raising of Lazarus. The authoress of this cult boldly says, "Jesus restored Lazarus by the understanding that he had never died, not by an admission that his body had died and then lived again"—although we read in St. John's Gospel, "Then said Jesus unto them, plainly, Lazarus is dead"—and although we read again that he had been dead four days when Jesus called him to life again. "By this time," said Martha, "he stinketh."

I now call attention to one of the most astounding assertions to be found in this new Bible of this new religion: it denies that Jesus died on the Cross; it denies that He rose from the dead. Here is its language:

"His disciples believed Jesus dead while he was hidden in the sepulcher, whereas he was alive, demonstrating within the narrow tomb the power of spirit to overrule mortal, material sense" (p. 44, ed. of 1907).

In fact, He was engaged those three days in the sepulcher in resuscitating His wasted energies, healing His torn palms, binding up His wounded side and lacerated feet—and all this "on the basis of Christian Science" (p. 44). This absolute contradiction of all the gospel records and of the Creed of all the Christian ages is worthy of careful attention.

If we consider now the mission of Jesus Christ—the purpose of His coming—we find in the text-book of Christian Science another complete contradiction to the Chris-

tian Creed. That Creed has been expressed for nineteen centuries in the words of the angel, "Call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins." But it appears in this new evangel that Christ came to save men, not from their sins, but from the false belief that they are sinners. Here is the language used by the founder of Christian Science, "Matter and evil (including all inharmony, *sin*, disease, and death) are unreal." "It (evil or sin) is a false belief." "Man is incapable of sin." "Is there no sin? The only reality of sin is the awful fact that unrealities seem real." But "If there is no sin, why did Jesus come to save sinners? *Jesus came to seek and to save them from this false belief*" (*Miscellanies*, p. 63). Again we read, "Jesus came to seek and to save such as believe in the reality of the unreal! to save them from this false belief." Once more: "To get rid of sin thro' Christian Science is to divest sin of any supposed reality" (p. 234, ed. of 1893). Thus Christian Science contradicts the words of the Angel; contradicts the words of the apostles; contradicts the Christian Creed; contradicts the words of Christ Himself, when they affirm, as they all do with one accord, that the mission of Christ was to save sinners from their sins.

It is not surprising, then, that we find no doctrine of Atonement in the Creed of Christian Science. Christ is never held up as the great High Priest who made on the Cross the one perfect and sufficient sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It teaches that "another's suffering cannot lessen our liability." The only atonement it knows is "constant self-immolation on the part of the sinner." That is to say, the sinner makes his own atonement. Again we are told, "Reformation cancels the crime." Christ said, "This is my blood of the new Testament which is shed for you for the remission of sins." St. Paul said, "Christ made peace by the blood of His Cross"; and again, "We were reconciled to God by the death of His Son." And St. John says, "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin."

But this founder of a new religion tells us "the material blood of Jesus was no more efficacious to cleanse from sin when it was shed upon the accursed tree than when it was flowing through his veins" (p. 25, ed. of 1907).

3. Let us now pass to another article of the Christian

Creed concerning Christ: "The third day He rose again from the dead." What has Christian Science to say to this? It simply denies it. Denying that He died on the Cross, it necessarily follows that it denies that He rose from the dead. Here is its language: His disciples "saw Him after His crucifixion, and learned that He had not died." Thus the Rock upon which the Christian Faith and the Christian Church were built nineteen centuries ago is dissolved into unreality. As we reflect upon this we hear the echo of the great apostle's voice, "If Christ be not risen, then is your faith vain; ye are yet in your sins."

4. The next article of the Christian Creed expresses faith in the Ascension of Christ: "He ascended into Heaven." Christian Science understands this to mean that "He rose even higher in the understanding of Spirit, God."

"His unchanged physical condition after what seemed to be death was followed by his exaltation above all material conditions, and explained his ascension. . . . In this His final demonstration, *called the Ascension*, . . . He rose above the physical knowledge of His disciples" (p. 46). Elsewhere it is taught that Christ and Jesus continued together apparently as one till after the Ascension, then Jesus disappeared—and Jesus was only a corporeal concept.

In other words, the objective fact of the Ascension is denied.

5. The Christian Creed goes on next to affirm the belief that Christ, who has ascended into heaven, shall come again to judge the world: "From thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Let me say in one word that Christian Science denies the Second Coming of Christ. Here is what its author teaches: "Christ's Second Coming is Christian Science" (p. 587, ed. of 1893). The Bible says, "The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven"—but this inventor of a new cult tells us that Christ means the religious system she discovered in the year 1866!

As to Christ's coming to judge the world, this new Bible tells us in so many words, "No final judgment awaits mortals" (p. 187, ed. of 1893).

6. I pass to the next article in the Christian Creed: "*I believe in the Holy Ghost*." Christian Science denies the personality of the Holy Ghost. The woman who invented it, dares to say that by the Holy Ghost is to be understood

“Christian Science.” Commenting on the words of Christ, “He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you forever.” She says, “This Comforter I understand to be Divine Science”—which is her term for the system which she has promulgated. I may here remark that the doctrine of the Trinity is not part of the Creed of Christian Science. It is alluded to as “a theory.”

7. The only other article of the Creed that my space allows me to compare with the Creed of Christian Science is this, “I believe in the Resurrection of the body.”

Now St. Paul has taught us that “flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption,” so that we do not expect at the Resurrection a body of flesh and blood, but a spiritual body.

But Christian Science denies that there will be any resurrection of the body in any sense. It says: “The belief that material bodies return to dust, hereafter to rise up as spiritual bodies, is incorrect” (p. 73, ed. of 1907).

And now I ask your readers to consider the result of the comparison which I have made between the Christian Creed and the Creed of Christian Science. In every instance I have quoted the very words of the authorized writings of the founder of this new cult. And the result is that every article of the Apostles’ Creed which expresses the faith of Christendom is denied by Christian Science. The two systems are thus seen to be wholly different—yes, diametrically opposed. They represent two different religions—not two phases of the same religion. So sharp is this antithesis that if one is true the other must be false. They cannot both be true.

Let me also point out that the conclusions I have reached rest upon a solid foundation, because I have drawn them entirely from the book called *Science and Health*, which is the Bible of this new religion—declared by its founder to be absolutely without error, and from one or two other authorized writings of the same person. Hence the conclusion is absolutely unassailable, that the Creed of Christian Science and the Christian Creed are mutually contradictory. But I do not assert that all Christian Scientists have forsaken all the articles of the Christian Creed. I hope that very many of them are inconsistent with their new Creed, and hold fast at least to some of the elements

of the Christianity on which they have formally turned their backs.

Before concluding let me indicate briefly some of the *claims* and some of the *tenets* of Christian Science. As to the former, the author of the cult tells us that her discovery of the true philosophy of religion in 1866 was a fresh fulfilment of the prophecy of Emmanuel, "God with us" (p. 107). It was a new Gospel. It was, in fact, Christ himself (p. 242). It was a permanent dispensation to remain forever among men; and its mission is "to take away the sins of the world" (p. 150)—the thing which the Christian Church has always hitherto attributed to Jesus Christ.

It claims, also, that if men will faithfully follow the philosophy of Christian Science, "death will be obsolete" (p. 90); "perpetual youth will be attained" (p. 245), in proof of which an instance is cited of a lady of ninety years developing a complete new set of teeth under the influence of Christian Science! (p. 247). Finally, it is claimed that "when we wake to the truth of Being, all error, pain, weakness, weariness, sorrow, sin, and death will be unknown" (p. 219). Even the lightning "will become harmless" (p. 97).

As we listen to these claims, we say to ourselves,—“and yet the author and discoverer and apostle of this strange cult, who has been almost worshiped for a generation by her followers—even she succumbed to the stroke of death!”

A word may be added concerning some of the *tenets* of Christian Science. Here are some of them:

Disease is a belief—an illusion (p. 168). Disease does not exist (p. 184). Sickness, sin, and death are not realities (p. 184). Death is a mortal dream (p. 42). The decomposition of mortal bodies in what is called death arises from a mental illusion (p. 92).

"You say a boil is painful; that is impossible!" (p. 231). "Suffering and disease are the self-imposed beliefs of mortals, and not the facts of being" (p. 221).

"The body would never be weary but for the mind saying so" (p. 218).

"Colds, coughs, and contagion are engendered wholly by human theories" (p. 220). Even poison, though inadvertently taken, will kill only because the majority of people believe it will. It is interesting—and not a little sugges-

tive—that in spite of the boundless healing powers attributed to Christian Science, its author advises that surgical cases and broken bones be left to the surgeons. Here is her language, “Until the advancing age admits the efficacy and supremacy of mind, it is better to leave surgery and the adjustment of broken bones and dislocations to the fingers of a surgeon ”! (p. 401).

Here it ought to be pointed out that, contrary to the popular impression, Christian Science does not exalt the power of prayer to heal the sick. On the contrary, it distinctly discourages it. The new Bible of this strange religion definitely teaches that we should not “implore a corporeal God to heal the sick out of his personal volition,” but rather we should “understand the infinitely divine principle which heals.” Again, she says, “Prayer to a personal God is a hindrance ” (p. 635, ed. of 1893). “I earnestly advise all Christian Scientists to remove from their observation or study the personal sense of any one ” (*Id.*). But is it *possible* to pray without contemplating the Divine personality? Once more, “The prayer of faith shall save the sick, says the Scripture. The only beneficial effect of such prayer for the sick is in the human mind, making it act more powerfully on the body, through a blind faith in God ” (p. 317, ed. of 1893). Yet again, “God is not influenced by man ” (*Id.*). “Prayer to a personal God hinders spiritual growth.” “This common custom of praying for the sick finds help in blind unbelief ” (*Id.* p. 318, ed. of 1893).

This review of the teaching of Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy inevitably brings to mind the words of Christ to His disciples, “Take heed that no man deceive you, for many shall come in my name, saying, ‘I am Christ,’ and shall deceive many.” And the conclusion is inevitable, also. This new religion is not the Christian religion, and whoever leaves the Christian Church to attach himself to it becomes an apostate from Christianity. Its treatment of the Bible can only be described as “handling the word of God deceitfully.” Using its phraseology, it evacuates it of its plain meaning, not hesitating even to flatly contradict its statements.

In confirmation of this indictment, the following examples may suffice: The Bible says Jesus died on the Cross and arose from the dead. This woman’s new Bible says Jesus did not

die, and did not rise from the dead. The Bible says, "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son." This nineteenth-century self-appointed prophetess changes this as follows: "When we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the (*seeming*) death of His Son."

The prophet Isaiah says of the Messiah, "Unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given, . . . and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." This sublime prophecy is interpreted to predict the birth of Christian Science—born of a thrice-married and once-divorced woman. Accordingly we read in one of her writings, "*The Star of Bethlehem is the Star of Boston.*"¹

If any one replies, How can this system be false when we see the wonderful cures wrought by it? In reply, I will not enter into any discussion of the reality of those cures, or the method by which they are wrought, but I will simply say, If every one of them has really been wrought, that does not prove the truth of Christian Science; for our Saviour warns us that the "false Christs and false prophets shall show great signs and wonders; in so much that they shall deceive the very elect."

Christians are commanded to "try the spirits whether they be of God," to test every doctrine by the Word of God, and, if it cannot stand that test, to know that "it is not of God." This I have done. It is for your readers to judge of the result.

I have deemed it entirely unnecessary to deal with the assertions and the negations of the article which has suggested this paper. It is enough, in answer to the question, "*Must Protestantism Adopt Christian Science?*" to show that the two systems are irreconcilable—hence Protestantism can only adopt Christian Science by abandoning and repudiating every fundamental doctrine for which it stands.

I forbear to comment on the railing accusations with which the article abounds against the Christian Church and the

¹It is often difficult to verify quotations from *Science and Health*, because of the extraordinary changes made in successive editions of the book. Thus the *first* chapter in one edition becomes the *sixth* in another; the *second* becomes the *seventh*; the *third* becomes the *eighth*, etc. Consequently, the pagination in the different editions is sometimes entirely different, and verification of quotations is often practically impossible.

Christian Ministry. It combines an extravagant eulogy of Christian Scientists with an extraordinary denunciation of the sins and failures of the Christian Church. The Christian Church is "materialized"; it "lives for itself"; it is "a party to the system of oppression of Divine manhood"; it retains bad members "because they help support the Church"; it is full of "materialism," "selfishness," and "the absence of the sense of God"; in short, it suggests Christ's rebuke, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!"

To this philippic against the Christian Church it is quite unnecessary here to reply. One thing, however, inevitably suggests itself as one reads the article. This anonymous and unknown priest of the Protestant Episcopal Church must have been very unfortunate in his experience, as a witness for Christ and a guide of souls, if the picture he here presents is drawn in any large degree from the results of his own ministry.

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